FLORIDA CAVERNS STATE PARK

MARIANNA
FLORIDA

Ephemeral
Jackson
Co.

Geologists have determined that 240,000,000 years ago all of Florida was covered by warm shallow seas. A thick layer of ooze and calcium (lime) was deposited on the bottom by decaying plants and the flesh, shells and bones of countless generations of marine animals. Some of the shells may still be seen imbedded in the walls and ceilings of the caves.

Then, as incalculable time passed, these deposits became harder as other layers were added. The level of the sea and of the land varied from time to time and eventually the calcareous deposits became rock.

The sea finally receded and this layer of rock, known as Ocala Limestone, is found under practically the whole State of Florida. The shells and other materials composing this rock give students and geologists the necessary clues to determine the age, calculated in millions of years, when it was formed.

SOFTER PORTIONS WASHED AWAY

Sometime after the last Ice Age erosion took place, as this part of Florida was raised above the level of the sea. The softer portions of the rock, as well as the deposits which had not hardened into rock, were washed or leached away by underground water and water descending from above seeking lower levels. Thus underground rooms and passages were made. Some were wide, many were narrow, numbers of them were low and some were high. At first all were bare and devoid of beauty or ornamentation. As the bed of the nearby Chipola River wore down and down, eventually the caverns were drained and then no more passages or rooms were formed. However, at this stage they were not beautiful and not very interesting.

NATURE DECORATES CAVERNS

Then started a period of decoration and ornamentation which one can see is still continuing. Water, limestone, evaporation, minerals, vegetation and time were the Master Artists, materials and contributing factors.

The rain water seeped down from above and with it carried lime in solution as well as traces of minerals and organic matter from the forest above. As the water descended evaporation took place and the solids in the liquids were left as deposits.

In some places stalactites forming downward from above resemble tiny icicles. From dripping water and solids in solution stalagmites built upward to resemble cypress knees. When the stalactites and stalagmites joined they became beautiful columns, or if against a wall, beautiful pilasters. In some places the whole ceiling is as beautiful as that of a Venetian palace and in others it looks like closely packed soda straws.

The colors vary from white to tan, yellow and brown depending on tinting received from iron compounds, other minerals and vegetation.

You can see where massive columns have formed, where flow sheets have made what looks like delicate or heavy draperies. Names have been given to the various rooms depending on how they appear. One looks as though great hams hang from the ceiling. In another the form and color of the rock looks just like bacon. In the Cathedral Room the fluted columns resemble a pipe organ and an altar in a setting of thousands of intricate stalactites. Appropriate lighting enhances the effect. An elfin pool enables one to see his own reflection against a backdrop of stiletto sharp formations. Naturally visitors named it "Mirror Pool." In one room from the floor rises a "Moorish Castle" with bulbous domes and minarets.

Great rounded masses rise from the floor, some reach to the ceiling, while others never made it that high. There are formations resembling animals, birds, fruits, flowers and even human beings. A "Waterfall" of rock seems to flow gracefully in milky colors. Nearby is a massive "Irish shillalah." The imagination can run riot here!

"This is a fairy workshop; aided by knavish dwarfs who delighted in straight artistry as well as prankishly mixing both art and functional things together" said one visitor.

HOW THEY WERE DISCOVERED

These are the virgin caves never seen by man before March, 1937 when the late mining engineer, Oliver A. Chalifoux of the National Park Service and his rodman, Mr. Colston discovered them. A tree in blowing down had pulled up some rocks and made an opening for them to enter. The caves were painstakingly opened; safe and easily traveled trails were laid out and constructed and only then made available to the public.

Now you can visit them in the company of trained guides who will make your visit safe, instructive and thoroughly enjoyable.

Florida Caverns compare in variety and beauty with any in the world. However, one can visit them without donning any special clothing, at any time of the year, as the temperature is constant at 63° and without crawling or otherwise tiring either young or older persons. The lighted caves take about forty-five minutes to traverse.

GENERAL.—The comfortable lounge in the Administration Building is the starting point for all cavern tours. Cold drinks and light refreshments may be enjoyed there.

GUIDE SERVICE.—Guide service for tour through the caverns is 75c per person, 12 years and over; under 12 years, 25c per person; public school groups with teacher, 25c each; group of 25 or more, 12 years and over, by reservation, 50c per person.

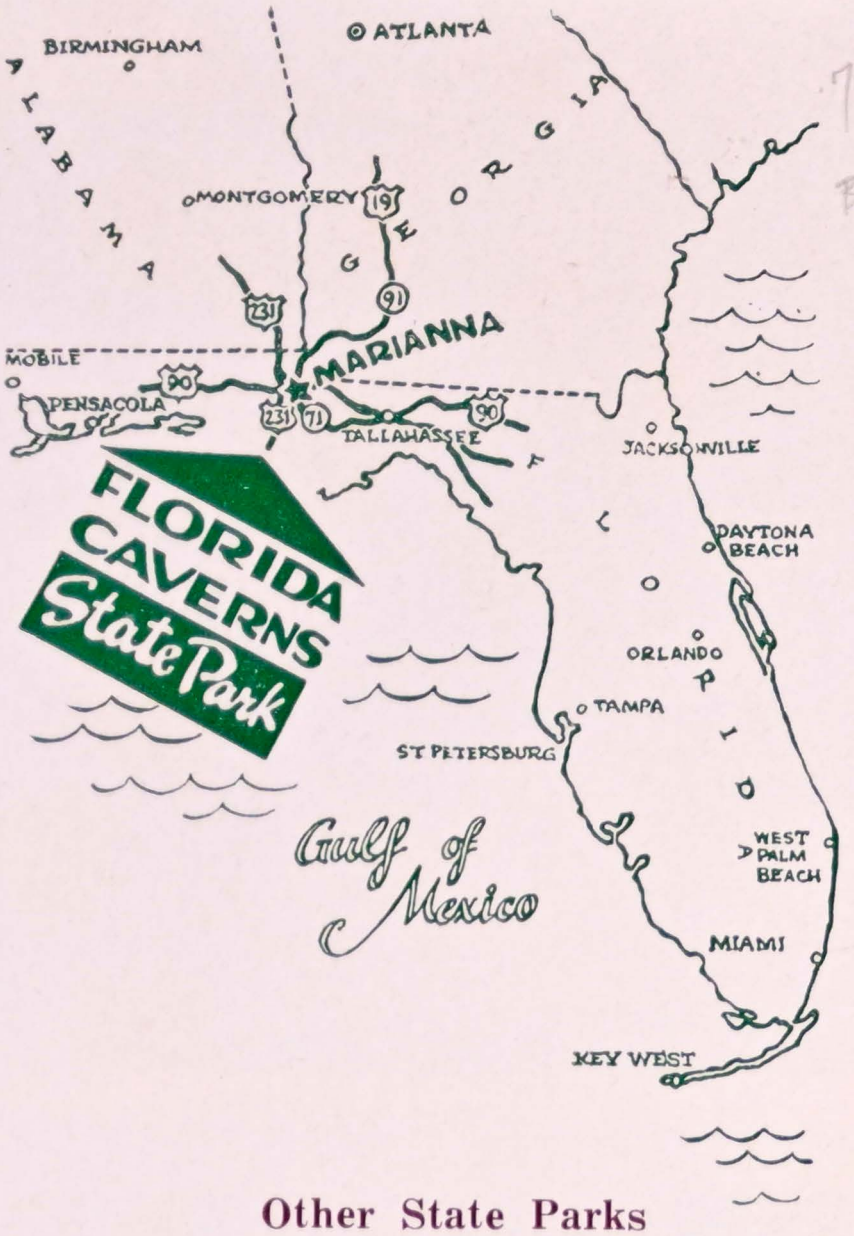
CAMPING AND PICNICKING.—Tent camping 25c a day per person; firewood, 25c a bundle; hot showers and laundry facilities provided free. Free picnic grounds with large picnic pavilion. (Gate key issued campers.)

GOLF COURSE.—Nine-hole course, laid out after the design of the famous St. Andrews course in Scotland. Light refreshments at Club House. Green fee; $1.25 per day.

TRANSPORTATION.—Taxi service is available at Marianna.

STATE PARK GOOD MANNERS.—They are posted in the park for your safety and comfort. Dogs only on leash. Dogs not allowed in park after closing hours. No firearms or intoxicants. Rock, in all its natural beauty, makes this park interesting, please do not break or take any.

INFORMATION. — Additional information can be obtained from the Superintendent.



Other State Parks

Anastasia, St. Augustine
Collier-Seminole, Naples
Fort Clinch, Fernandina Beach
Gold Head Branch, Keystone Heights
Hugh Taylor Birch, Fort Lauderdale
Highlands Hammock, Sebring
Hillsborough River, Zephyrhills
Jonathan Dickinson, Stuart
Little Talbot Island, Jacksonville
Manatee Springs, Chiefland
Myakka River, Sarasota
O'Leno, High Springs
Tomoka, Ormond Beach
(Also see those mentioned inside)

Historic Memorials

Addison Blockhouse, Daytona
Battle of Marianna Monument, Marianna
Bulow Plantation Ruins, Bunnell
Dade Battlefield, Bushnell
First Confederate Monument, DeFuniak Springs
Gamble Mansion, Ellenton
Green Mound, Wilbur-by-the-Sea
Huguenot Memorial Area, Mayport
Kingsley Plantation, Mayport
Madira Bickel Mound, Rubonia
Sugar Mill Ruins, New Smyrna Beach
Olustee Battlefield, Olustee
Ormond Tomb, Bunnell
Rollins Bird and Plant Sanctuary, Mayport
Turtle Mound, New Smyrna Beach
Yellow Bluff Fort, New Berlin
Yulee Mill, Old Homosassa
(Also see those mentioned inside)

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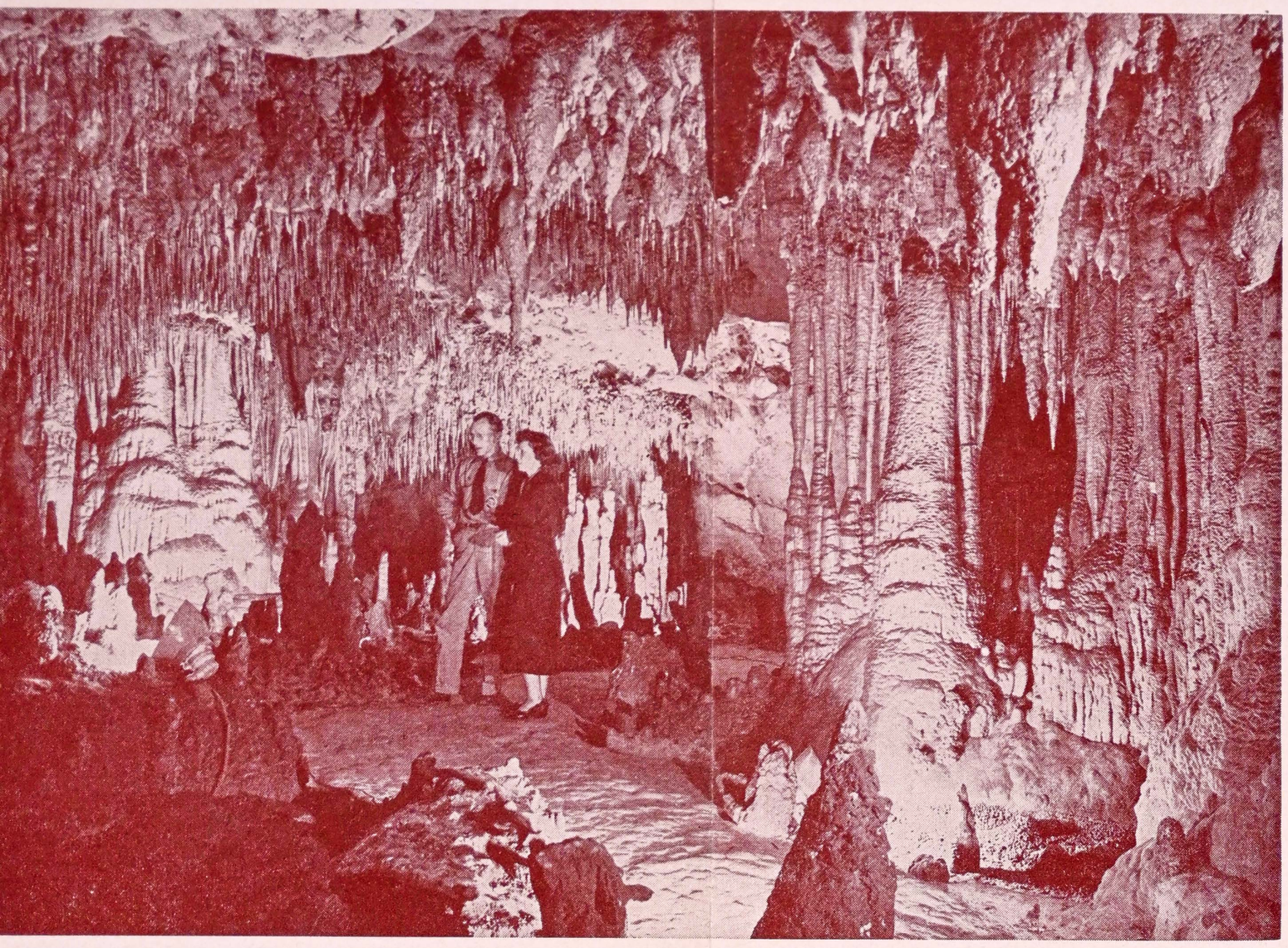
FLORIDA CAVERNS STATE PARK



Winter or Summer

WELCOME!!

When you visit Florida Caverns State Park you are in a strategic position to visit many others in this vicinity. To the west, near Pensacola, is historic old Fort Pickens on the end of Santa Rosa Island.

To the south, at Panama City, is delightful St. Andrews State Park noted for both fishing and bathing.

South at Port St. Joe is State Constitution Historic Memorial with its outstanding interpretive museum.

Southeast at Apalachicola is the Dr. John Gorrie Historic Memorial and the museum depicting the invention of the ice machine.

To the southeast, near Bristol, just a short distance away, is Torreya State Park where you can turn back the clock at the Old Gregory House near where Florida's early botanist Hardy B. Croom discovered the Torreya tree.

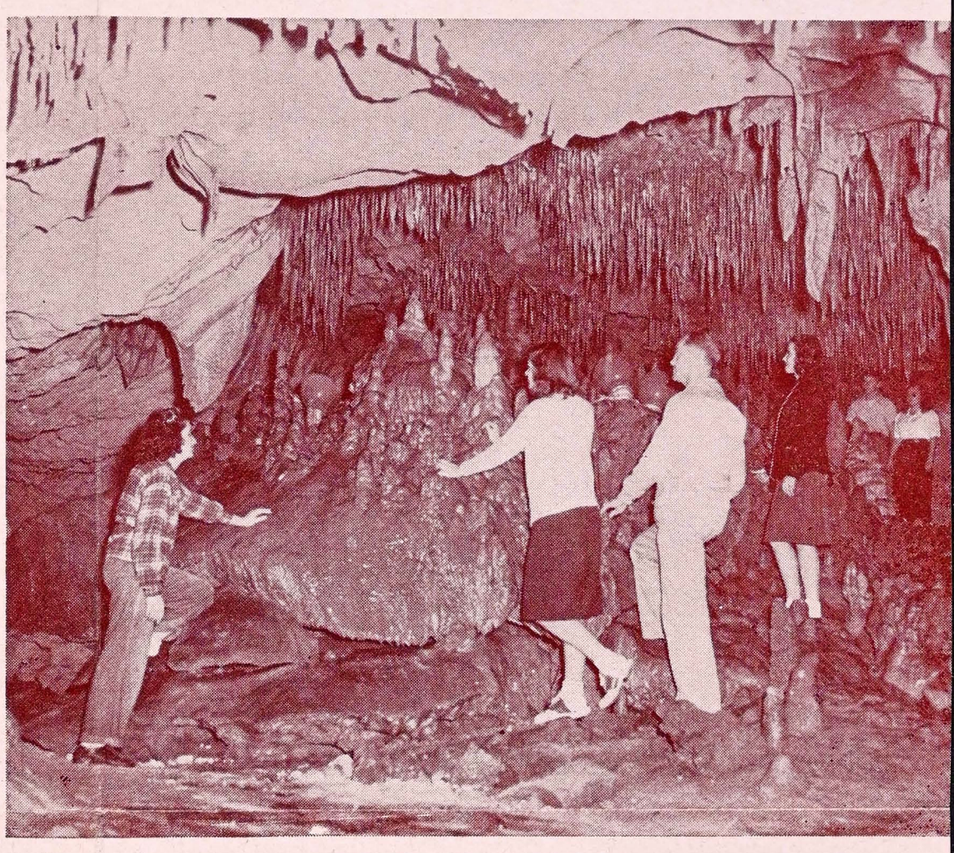
Eastward lies Killearn Gardens, near Tallahassee; a State Park featuring azaleas and camellias in a natural setting.

Still farther eastward is Suwannee River State Park, a magnificent area on the river with the famous name.

Southeastward also is Natural Bridge where valorous defenders "Held the bridge." There are others eastward and southward, each worth either a brief or an extended visit.

Unique Beautiful Instructive Enjoyable

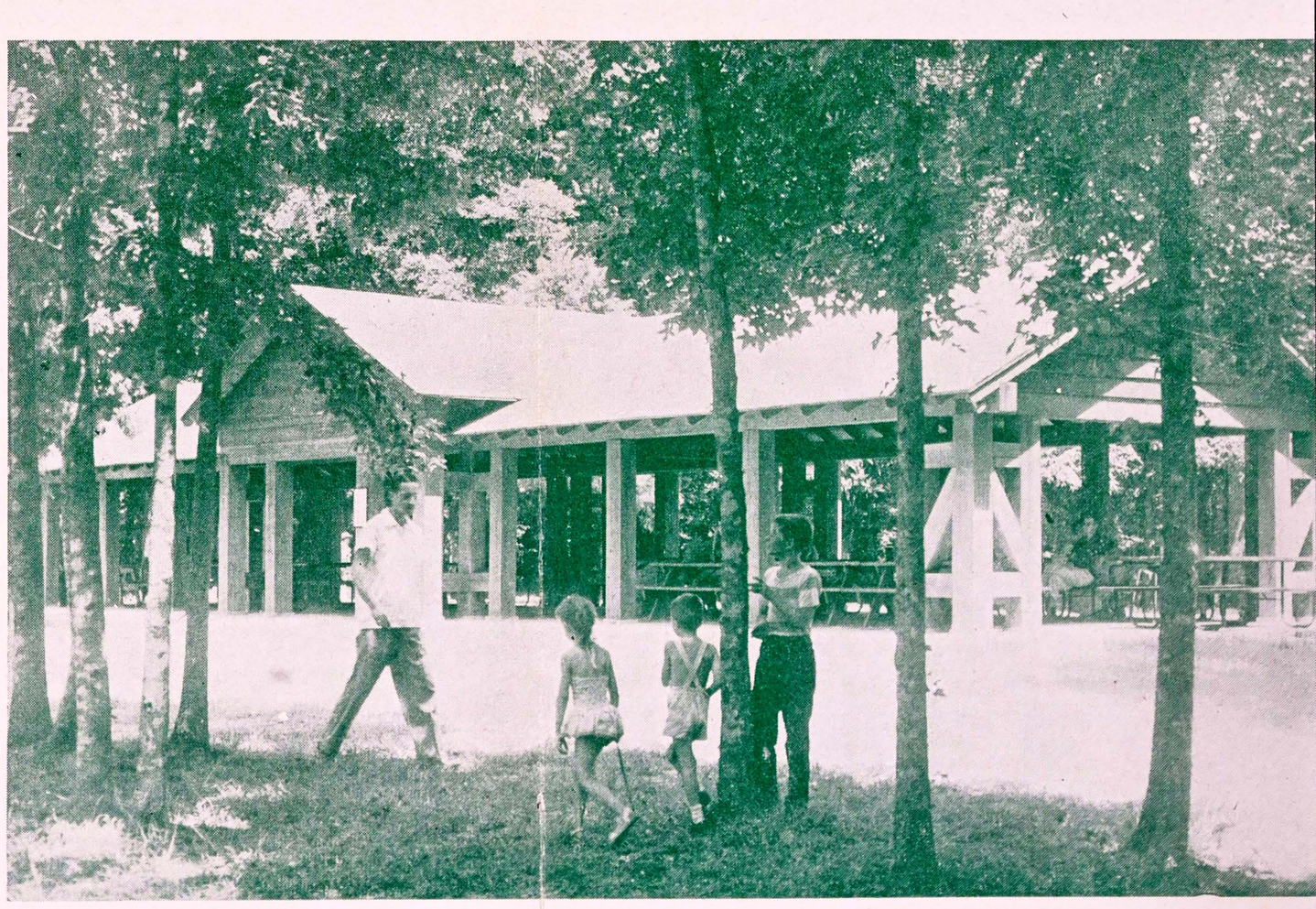
A FLORAL FAIRYLAND



AN ELFIN CASTLE!

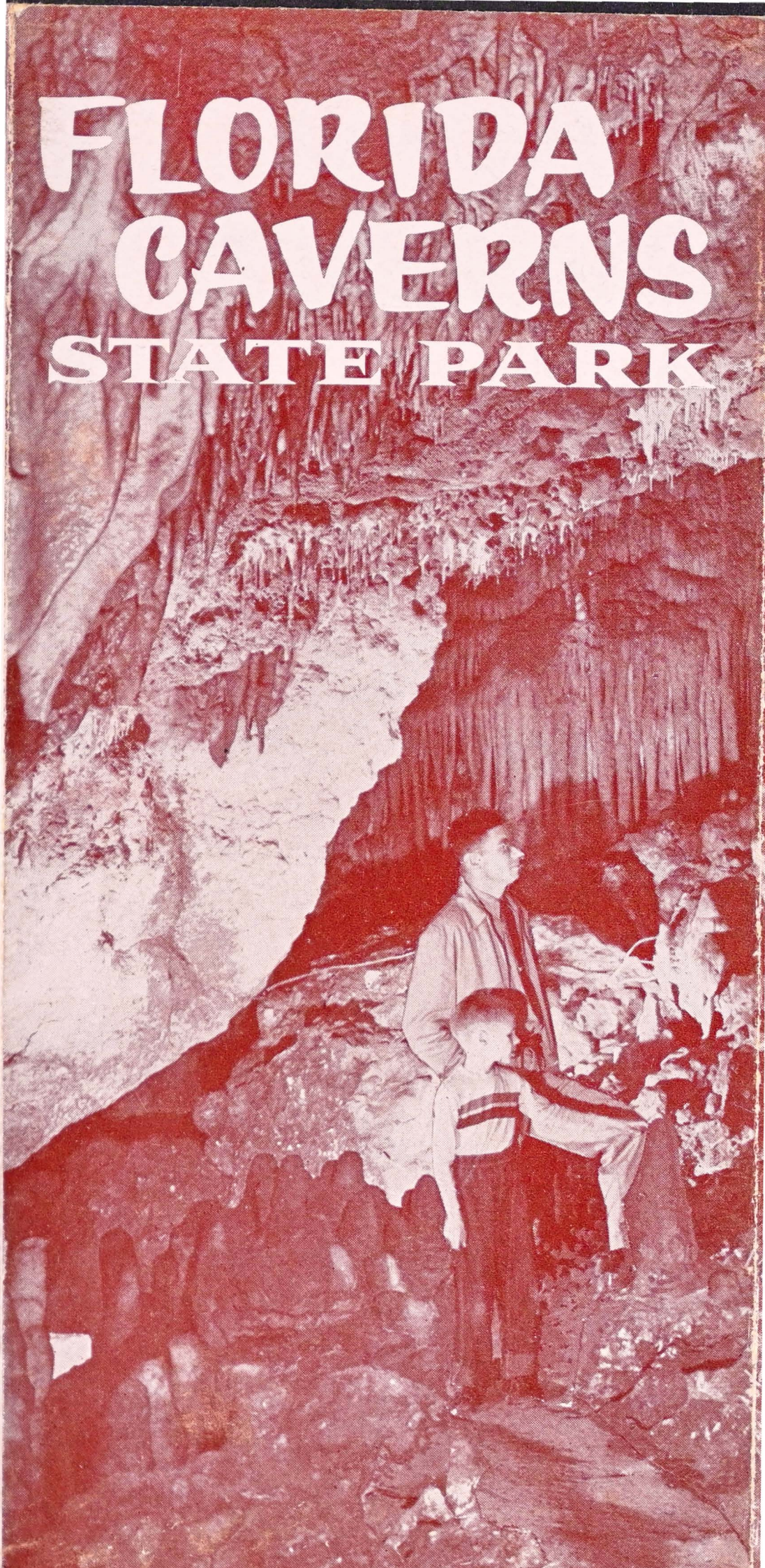
A CHANCE TO PLAY GOLF

A MINIATURE LAKE



YOU CAN PICNIC OR CAMP

FLORIDA CAVERNS STATE PARK



FLORIDA CAVERNS STATE PARK, *1,187 acres, 3 miles north of Marianna, on State Road No. 167. Open 7 a.m. to sundown, weekdays, Sundays and holidays. Excellent golf course. Refreshments. Noted for spring flowers.*